

All claims of the present application are rejected under 35 USC § 102 or 35 USC § 103 over Brandenburg U.S. Patent No. 5,894,516.

The effective date of the Brandenburg patent is July 10, 1996. Applicants submit herewith the Rule 131 Declaration of inventors Dillard, Goddard and Smith providing additional evidence establishing an actual reduction to practice of the invention as claimed in claims 3-24 prior to July 10, 1996. All dates redacted from the Dillard, Goddard and Smith declaration are prior to July 10, 1996. Claims 3-24 are therefore allowable.

Applicant acknowledges the courtesy of the Examiner and the Examiner's supervisor, Mr. Trammell, in conducting a telephone interview to discuss the contents of the Rule 131 declarations submitted herewith.

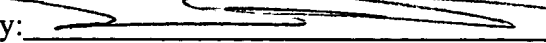
Applicants' election to overcome the Brandenburg reference with a Rule 131 declaration at this time is not an acquiescence to the basis for the Examiner's rejection of the claims. Applicants reserve the right to argue the merits of the rejection at any later date.

CONCLUSION

The claims now being in form for allowance, reconsideration and allowance is respectfully requested. If the Examiner has questions or wishes to discuss any aspect of the case, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned at the telephone number given below.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: Dec 5, 2000

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